

V.A Justification of the War (11 Vols.)

 Public Statements (2 Vols.)

Volume 1: A—The Truman Administration

 B-- The Eisenhower Administration

 C-- The Kennedy Administration

TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE



UNITED STATES - VIETNAM RELATIONS

1945 - 1967



VIETNAM TASK FORCE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SET #1

TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE

V. A. - Vol I
JUSTIFICATION OF THE WAR

PUBLIC STATEMENTS

- A. Truman Administration
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PART V.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE WAR -- PUBLIC STATEMENTS

Foreword

This portion of the study consists of an examination of the public statements justifying U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Only official statements contained in either the U.S. Department of State Bulletins or the Public Papers of the Presidents were reviewed. Although conclusions are based primarily on the statements of the President, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, the statements of other high-ranking government officials were also studied in ascertaining the policy context of the quoted material. This report includes analyses of the Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy periods. The statements are organized chronologically within each Administration, and are summarized at the head of each section.

- A. Truman Administration
- B. Eisenhower Administration
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TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION

SUMMARY

The statements enclosed are from the period 1950 - 1952: from the Secretary of State's announcement marking the beginning of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam to the NATO resolution supporting the French fight in Indochina. The justifications advanced for the U.S. commitment in Indochina include the following:

- a. The Soviets are engaged in a "monstrous conspiracy to stamp out freedom all over the world," and Soviet imperialism, with Communist China as its instrument, poses a direct threat to the independence of the Associated States of Indochina.
- b. The defense of Indochina is an integral part of the worldwide resistance by free nations to communist aggression and subversion.
- c. The raw materials and agricultural products of Southeast Asia are "vitally needed" by the free nations of the world.
- d. The United States, in the interest of preventing a third world war, has provided aid to the Associated States and France.

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V. A.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE WAR -- PUBLIC STATEMENTS

TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION

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V. JUSTIFICATION OF THE WAR -- PUBLIC

A. Truman Administration

1. Secretary of State Statement on Extension of Military and Economic Aid, May 8, 1950, Department of State Bulletin, May 22, 1950, p. 821:

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"The United States Government, convinced that neither national independence nor democratic evolution exist in any area dominated by Soviet imperialism, considers the situation to be such as to warrant its accord-ing economic aid and military equipment to the Associated States of Indochina and to France in order to assist them in restoring stability and permitting these states to pursue their peaceful and democratic development."

2. President's Radio Report to the American People on Korea and on U.S. Policy in the Far East, April 11, 1951, Public Papers of the Presidents, p. 223.

"I want to talk to you plainly tonight about what we are doing in Korea and about our policy in the Far East.

"In the simplest terms, what we are doing in Korea is this: We are trying to prevent a third world war.

* * *

"The Communists in the Kremlin are engaged in a monstrous conspiracy to stamp out freedom all over the world. If they were to succeed, the United States would be numbered among their principal victims. It must be clear to everyone that the United States cannot -- and will not -- sit idly by and await foreign conquest. The only question is: What is the best time to meet the threat and how is the best way to meet it?

"The best time to meet the threat is in the beginning. It is easier to put out a fire in the beginning when it is small than after it has become a roaring blaze. And the best way to meet the threat of aggression is for the peace-loving nations to act together. If they don't act together, they are likely to be picked off, one by one.

"If they had followed the right policies in the 1930's -- if the free countries had acted together to crush the aggression of the dictators, and if they had acted in the beginning when the aggression was small -- there probably would have been no World War II.

"If history has taught us anything, it is that aggression anywhere in the world is a threat to the peace everywhere in the world. When that aggression is supported by the cruel and selfish rulers of a powerful nation who are bent on conquest, it becomes a clear and present danger to the security and independence of every free nation.

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"I have another secret intelligence report here. This one tells what another Communist officer in the Far East told his men several months before the invasion of Korea. Here is what he said: 'In order to successfully undertake the long-awaited world resolution, we must first unify Asia...Java, Indochina, Malaya, India, Tibet, Thailand, Philippines, and Japan are our ultimate targets....The United States is the only obstacle on our road for the liberation of all the countries in southeast Asia. In other words, we must unify the people of Asia and crush the United States.'

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"The dangers are great. Make no mistake about it. Behind the North Koreans and Chinese Communists in the front lines stand additional millions of Chinese soldiers. And behind the Chinese stand the tanks, the planes, the submarines, the soldiers, and the scheming rulers of the Soviet Union."

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3. President Truman's Special Message to Congress on Mutual Security Program, May 24, 1951, Public Papers of the Presidents, p. 309:

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"In Asia, in a vast area stretching from Afghanistan to Korea, free countries are struggling to meet communist aggression in all its many forms. Some of these countries are battling the communist armies of Soviet satellites; some are engaged in bitter civil strife against communist-led guerrillas; all of them face the immediate danger of communist subversion.

"Soviet intentions with regard to these countries are unmistakably clear. Using the weapons of subversion, false propaganda and civil war, the Kremlin has already reduced China to the status of a satellite. The Soviet rulers have turned their satellite armies loose on the Republic of Korea. Communist rebellion is raging in Indochina. In Burma, the Philippines, and other places, communist-inspired groups are stirring up internal disorder. In all countries, they are trying to exploit deep-seated economic difficulties -- poverty, illiteracy and disease.

"This campaign threatens to absorb the manpower and the vital resources of the East into the Soviet design of world conquest. It threatens to deprive the free nations of some of their most vitally needed raw materials. It threatens to turn more of the peaceful millions of the East into armies to be used as pawns at the disposal of the Kremlin.

"Aside from immediate considerations of security, the continued independence of these nations is vital to the future of the free world. Many of these nations are new to self government. They have dedicated themselves to the ideals of national independence, of human liberty, and social progress. Their hundreds of millions of citizens are eager for justice and liberty and a stake in the future.

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"These countries demonstrate the power and vitality of the ideals of our own American Revolution; they mark the sweeping advance across the world of the concepts of freedom and brotherhood. To lose these countries to the rulers of the Kremlin would be more than a blow to our military security and our economic life. It would be a terrible defeat for the ideals of freedom -- with grave spiritual consequences for men everywhere who share our faith in freedom.

"All these considerations make it essential for the United States to help the free countries of Asia in their struggle to make good their independence and bring economic and social progress to their people. Where the governments of these countries are striving to establish free and stable political institutions, to build up their military defenses, and to raise the standard of living above the level of bare subsistence, we can and should give them assistance. We cannot replace their own strong efforts, but we can supplement them.

"This Mutual Security Program is intended to do that. On the military side, it will supply certain of the Asian countries with items of military equipment and the training they need for their defense forces. On the economic side, it will provide a number of the Asian countries with the most urgently needed commodities, machinery, and tools, and with technical advice in such fields as agriculture, industry, health, and governmental administration.

"The assistance I am recommending for Asian countries, 555 million dollars in military aid and 375 million dollars in economic aid, is so planned as to meet the most pressing needs in the various countries, and is intended to provide the crucial margin of resources which will enable them to move forward.

"Military assistance under this program will go to the Chinese armies on Formosa, to help keep that island out of the hands of Communist China. It will go to Indo-China, where over 100,000 French troops are fighting side-by-side with the forces of Viet Nam, Laos, and Cambodia against communist-led forces. It will go to the Philippines and to Thailand, to help build forces strong enough to insure internal security and discourage outside attack. Some of these military assistance funds will also be available for allocation to other countries in the area if a critical need arises.

"The military aid under this program will supplement other military efforts against communism in Asia. The countries we will be aiding, and a number of others, are supporting military forces with their own funds. France is supplying the largest part of the military supplies needed in Indo-China, and Britain is supplying her forces which are fighting guerrillas in the Malay States. The substantial military aid we are giving to the forces of the Republic of Korea is included in the budget for our military services.

"The struggle for security and peace in Asia is far more than a military matter. In many of the Asian countries, including all the countries which need military aid, economic assistance is also required.

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4. The Military Aid Program: Statement by the Departments of State and Defense, September 23, 1951, Department of State Bulletin, October 8, 1951, p. 570:

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"The participants were in complete agreement that the successful defense of Indochina is of great importance to the defense of all South-east Asia...."

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5. The Defense of Indochina: Communique Regarding Discussions Between Representatives of the United States, France, Viet-Nam, and Cambodia, June 18, 1952, Department of State Bulletin, June 30, 1952, p. 1010:

"The principle which governed this frank and detailed exchange of views and information was the common recognition that the struggle in which the forces of the French Union and the Associated States are engaged against the forces of communist aggression in Indochina is an integral part of the world-wide resistance by the Free Nations to Communist attempts at conquest and subversion...."

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6. Support by NATO of the French Union Defense Efforts in Indochina: Resolution Adopted by the North Atlantic Council, December 17, 1952, Department of State Bulletin, January 5, 1953, p. 4:

"The North Atlantic Council

"Recognizes that resistance to direct or indirect aggression in any part of the world is an essential contribution to the common security of the free world;

"HAVING BEEN INFORMED at its meeting in Paris on the 16th December of the latest developments in the military and political situation in Indo-China;

"Expresses its wholehearted admiration for the valiant and long continued struggle by the French forces and the armies of the Associated States against Communist aggression; and

"Acknowledges that the resistance of the free nations in South East Asia as in Korea is in fullest harmony with the aims and ideals of the Atlantic Community;

"And therefore agrees that the campaign waged by the French Union forces in Indo-China deserves continuing support from the NATO governments."